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The Character of New Testament Prophecy.

Dr. Thomas M. Lindsay, principal of the United Free Church College at Glasgow, in his excellent work on *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, says: It seems to be impossible to draw any line of demarkation between the prophecy of the Old and that of the New Testament, except that the latter partook of the universalistic character of the new revelation of the kingdom which our Lord proclaimed, and the "gift" was imparted to gentiles as well as to Jews. The same outstanding features characterized the prophets and prophecy in the two dispensations. In both cases the prophetic "call" came to the prophet personally and immediately in a unique experience; and when the "call" came, everything else had to be set aside, and the "word" from God had to be spoken. It is possible to compare narrowly Paul and Isaiah, John and Ezekiel, Polycarp and Jeremiah. In neither case was the prophetic "call" a call to office in the church. The New Testament prophets were no more presbyters or bishops in virtue of their "call" than were the Old Testament prophets elevated to the priesthood in Israel; and in both cases the regular office-bearers had to give way to and bow before the men through whom the Spirit of God spoke.

In Old Testament prophecy, as in the prophecy of the New Testament, the Spirit of God was given in a larger measure to some men and in a smaller degree to others; and in each case the natural faculties of the prophet had full play to exert themselves according to the capacities of the man. There were gradations in the prophetic order from men like Paul and Isaiah, who stood in the foremost rank, to the nameless prophet whom the lion slew, or the impetuous prophet who interrupted his brother in the meeting of the Corinthian congregation.

In both cases, true prophecy was surrounded with a fringe of prophet life which was hostile, and which was inspired by a spirit at variance with the purposes of Jehovah and with the principles of Jesus. In the Old Testament, as in the New, there was a marked tendency toward deterioration within the prophetic order.

In both cases the power to discriminate between the true and the false prophecy, between the man who spoke full of the Spirit of God and the member of the prophetic "guild," was left to the spiritual discernment of the people spoken to. The discerning faculty was often at fault; pretenders were received by and misled the faithful. Yet this power of spiritual insight was the only touchstone, and, indeed, there could have been no other in the last resort. For men can never get rid of their personal responsibility in spiritual things.